DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 367 891 CE 066 043

AUTHOR Neuman, Susan B.; And Others
TITLE Toward a Collaborative Approach to Parent Involvement: The Implications of Parents' Beliefs.
INSTITUTION Temple Univ., Philadelphia, Pa.
SPONS AGENCY Pennsylvania State Dept. of Education, Harrisburg. Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education.
PUB DATE Jun 93
NOTE 39p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Blacks; *Educational Attitudes; *Parent Attitudes; *Parent Child Relationship; Parent Education; Parent Influence; *Parent Participation; Parent Role; *Parent School Relationship; Partnerships in Education; Preschool Education
IDENTIFIERS 353 Project; African Americans; *Family Literacy

ABSTRACT

A project explored the possibility of creating a collaborative approach to parent involvement with their children's education. Participants in the family literacy program were 19 African-American adolescent mothers from low-income backgrounds whose children attended an early intervention program. Parents' beliefs about learning and literacy were sought through a series of peer group discussions. The data revealed a continuum of perspectives ranging from behavioral to constructivist beliefs, indicating that there may be important intragroup variability within a given sociocultural group. The discussions, however, also revealed shared goals that may be used to forge a collaborative relationship between parents and professionals to improve minority children's early education. Illustrations from a family literacy program were used to show how parent beliefs may be incorporated into programmatic changes, building constructive relationships that work toward supporting children's success in schooling. (Contains 63 references.) (KC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 367 891

RECEIVED
SEP 01 1993
BUREAU OF ADULT BASIC
AND LITERACY EDUCATION

Toward a collaborative approach to parent involvement: The implications of parents' beliefs

Susan B. Neuman
Tracy Hagedorn
Donna Celano
Pauline Daly
Temple University

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
C Keenan
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

The activity which is the subject of this report, was supported in part by the U.S. Department of Education. However, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Department of Education or the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

CE 066 043

Toward a collaborative approach to parent involvement: The implications of parents' beliefs

Although parent involvement programs in early intervention are abundant and thriving, critics have questioned their benefits for improving the lives and the educational success of young children (Diaz, Neal, & Vachio, 1991; Kochanska, Kuczynski, & Radke-Yarrow, 1989; Stevens, 1984; White, Taylor, & Moss, 1992). Many now challenge programs that are designed to exert a central influence on parent's caregiving roles, assuming that the skills they bring need to be replaced by the more "desirable" values represented by the school (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Delpit, 1988; Harry, 1992b; Silvern, 1988). Rather, they suggest that another approach is necessary to engage parents in the educational process, one that assumes a "posture of reciprocity" (Harry & Kalyanpur, 1991). From this perspective, it is believed that programs must forge collaborative relationships that involve a mutual understanding between teachers, parents and others in the community.

Establishing such supportive relationships that respect parents' responsible roles, however, requires greater sensitivity toward culturally and economically diverse families than has previously been reported. Much of the research (Moreno, 1991) has reflected an assumption that mainstream American values and behaviors represent the standard against which "good" parenting should be measured. The "ideal" middle-class mother, for example, has often been described as one who engages in inquiry-like verbalizations, rarely making negative, corrective, or punitive statements, compared to the "poor" lower-status mother who is seen as controlling, directive, and intrusive (Hess & McDevitt, 1984; Hess & Shipman, 1965; Laosa, 1980). Implicit in these

studies is that poor and/or minority parents are failing their children linguistically and cognitively, and showing little interest or value in education.

An alternative view is that lower-income mothers have high aspirations for their children, but do not have the mechanisms for attaining these goals (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Hale, 1982; Harry, 1992a). Comparing family-school relations between upper middle-class and working class families, for example, Lareau in her ethnographic study (1989) concluded that social class, specifically education, occupational status, and income, provide parents with unequal resources and dispositions toward school, differences that critically affected parent involvement in the educational experience of their children. She found that working-class parents believed that their role was to prepare children for school by teaching them manners and rudimentary skills, to be supportive, but not to intervene in their children's program.

Yet as Goldenberg has shown in his study of low-income Hispanic families, when perceived as being influential in learning, parents have been able to directly impact their children's early achievement (1987). Similarly, Delgado-Gaitan (1991) demonstrated that through culturally responsive communication, parents became aware of their children's conditions in school and their rights as parents to collectively shape some school practices. Thus, despite widely held views regardin incompatibilities between schools and minority children's homes, studies like these suggest that when such cooperative linkages are formed, parents can make important contributions to their children's growth and achievement.

Empowering families to share responsibility in children's early education may be particularly important in language and literacy development. Despite steady improvements, children from minority homes continue to lag far behind their nonminority peers in written language, and the gap progressively widens

thereafter (Madden, Slavin, Karweit, Dolan, & Wasik, 1993; Mullis, & Jenkins, 1990). Research on the effects of prevention and early intervention have supported a variety of strategies, including instructional practices (Pinnell, 1989; Schweinhart, & Weikart, 1988)and parent support activities (Smith, 1980; Zigler, & Valentine, 1979). For example, using the native Hawaiian collaborative "talk story" narrative form, Au and Jordon (1981)significantly improved Hawaiian children's success at learning to read, demonstrating that the quality of instruction can have an important influence on children's chances for academic success. Likewise, programs designed to support mothers' receptivity to children's early literacy demonstrations have also shown to be highly influential in promoting children's literacy opportunities and receptive language abilities (Neuman & Gallagher, in press). Taken together, these studies suggest that children's probability of becoming literate may be greatly enhanced when teachers become more responsive to the children's own culture, and when parents become more actively engaged in children's ongoing educational activities.

Still as Harry cautions (1992a), it could be difficult to establish reciprocal relations with parents who may see themselves as inadequate to the task of collaboration, or who may perceive this task as conflicting with their existing cultural traditions. A critical part of the empowerment process, therefore, may be to learn from the parents themselves, their beliefs, values and practices within their home and community. As Goldenberg and Gallimore (1991) have documented in their compelling study of Spanish early reading improvement, the more we know about the dynamics of these beliefs, the more likely we are to develop programs responsive to the families and children they are designed to serve.

An examination of beliefs could contribute to a better understanding of parental teaching and managerial strategies that influence their child-rearing practices. Described by Sigel and his colleagues (Sigel & McGillicuddy-De Lisi, 1984), beliefs, as "mental constructions of experience," are drawn from cultural sources of knowledge transmission, and serve as guides, motivators, and organizers for behavior with children (McGillicuddy-De Lisi, 1982; Sigel, 1985). On a sociocultural level, they help individuals to identify with one another, form groups and social systems (Buchmann & Schwille, 1983). Beliefs and given modes of behavior generally evolve over time, and reflect patterns of coping with and adapting to the surrounding environment (Ford; 1993; Pajares, 1992). Thus, as conceptualized, parents beliefs about their children's learning may ultimately provide more understanding of the history of the parent-child relationship from a cultural perspective (Sigel & McGillicuddy-Delisi, 1984). It may also refocus our attention on the **content** of parents' "educational messages" to children, rather than on the **form** or linguistic style (i.e. inquiry vs. directive) of these messages.

Examining beliefs may further help in the search for forces that guide parents' actions. As Nespor has argued (1987), beliefs tend to be more inflexible than knowledge systems, typically operating independently of the cognition associated with knowledge, yet they are far more influential than knowledge in determining how individuals organize and define tasks. They tend to be strong predictors of behavior. For example, in a study of parents' preferences for teaching their children, Sigel and his colleagues found that parents who preferred to use distancing strategies also held cognitive goals for their children, were child-centered, and encouraged independent thinking in their management and teaching strategies (Sigel, 1985). This implies that there is a systematic aspect to parental beliefs.

An understanding of the beliefs of culturally diverse families, then, could lead to more effective parent education programs that build on parents strengths and needs. This may be especially important for developing specialized services for such high-risk groups as is the focus of this research--teenage mothers and their children. Estimated to be one of 10 teenage girls in the US., teenage pregnancy is currently viewed as a social problem of growing proportions [Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1986]. Studies suggest that teen mothers tend to be less well-educated, less likely to be working, and more impoverished(Berlin & Sum, 1988; Landy & Walsh, 1988). Further, there is evidence that early pregnancy may have severe consequences on their children's future school performance and for their economic independence as adults (Furstenberg, Brooks-Gunn, & Morgan, 1987; Sander, 1991; Williams, 1991). Recent studies (Berlin & Sum, 1988; Reis & Herz, 1987), for example, indicate that children born of teen mothers are likely to suffer lifelong learning disabilities, suggesting a potential intergenerational transmission of low basic skills, low educational attainment and poverty.

Existing intervention programs for teen mothers, typically targeting either prevention or "deficiencies" in mothering, however, have shown little success (Fulton, Murphy, & Anderson, 1991; Landy & Walsh, 1988). Landy and Walsh (1988) have argued that many of these human service programs reflect an unconscious devaluing of the people they service by their lack an understanding of the culture and the context. Rather, it has been suggested that a more fruitful approach to intervention may lie in hearing the voices of the women themselves, their beliefs and values. A better understanding may ultimately help to support parent education programs that influence the nature and quality of family relations as well as children's growth and achievement.

In examining maternal beliefs and behaviors from culturally diverse groups, however, a frequently encountered error has been that of treating certain ethnic or cultural groups as if they were homogeneous, an assumption that has not been empirically supported (Laosa, 1981). Weisner and his colleagues (1988) have argued persuasively that such isomorphic representations could produce stereotyped or romanticized envisionments of a minority culture. For example, studies suggest that even within given sociocultural groups there may be important intragroup differences in how parents view and behave toward their children (Laosa, 1980; Norman-Jackson, 1982; Schachter, 1979). Such variability if ignored, Laosa warns (1981) could result in faulty interpretations of findings, and ultimately, rigid and insensitive approaches to resolve home and school discontinuities.

Consequently, this study was designed to elicit adolescent parents' beliefs about learning, and early literacy in particular. As part of a family literacy program, our goal was to establish a relationship with adolescent parents that respected their responsible roles as educators of their children, yet at the same time, guided them in ways to enhance their children's literacy opportunities. From an emergent literacy perspective, literacy learning is thought to include a broad array of activity on the part of the child (talking, labeling through pointing, drawing) that may be enhanced through adult interaction (Teale & Sulzby, 1989). By identifying shared goals, we then provide illustrations of ways in which these parental beliefs may be incorporated within a developmentally appropriate framework, helping to assist parents in fulfilling their aspirations for themselves and their children.

Methods

Participants and setting

Nineteen African-American adolescent mothers, all of whom had toddlers in an early intervention program, participated in the study. Average age of mothers was 19, ranging from 17 to 22. Nine of the mothers had one child, seven had two children, three had three children, with ages ranging from 2-months to 6 years. All were on public assistance, living in the most impoverished areas in the city.

Adolescent mothers were enrolled in a school district-sponsored Adult Basic Education (A.B.E.) or Graduate Equivalency Diploma (G.E.D.) program serving over 200 women in an urban metropolitan area. Having dropped out of school as a consequence of child-bearing, poor academic achievement, and economic circumstances, the program was designed to allow mothers to attend a year-long literacy program, with accompanying day care provided for their young children. Nine of the participants were enrolled in the A.B.E. program, specifically designed for students reading at the 5th-8th grade level, and 10 were involved in the G.E.D., reading at the 9th grade level and above. Although family support systems varied, the majority of the women lived with their mothers and other members of their kinship network, including grandparents, nieces and nephews. Only two women lived on their own.

Infants and toddlers of adolescent mothers were provided free day-care in a Center located two blocks away from their school site.

Materials

Much of the research has examined parental beliefs through educational belief scales (Rescorla, 1987; Schaefer & Edgerton, 1985), vignettes (McGillicuddy-De Lisi, 1982), and inventories (Strom, 1984). In addition to

sharing strengths and weaknesses inherent in all self-report instruments, these tools have tended to reflect mainstream culture, and have not been particularly sensitive to varying modes of family interactions that might occur in different sociocultural groups. Further, items from questionnaires have often fallen prey to an "it depends" type thinking, failing to relate specific beliefs to the myriad of contexts that may have been responsible for their creation (Pajares, 1992). For these reasons, among others, some researchers have suggested that open-ended formats may lead to far richer and more accurate understandings of beliefs.

To encourage such open-ended responses, peer discussion groups were formed to engage participants in focused discussion. We employed a set of nondirective procedures, designed to allow participants to respond without setting boundaries or providing clues for potential response categories (Krueger, 1988). Non-directive procedures generally begin with limited assumptions and place considerable emphasis on getting "in tune" with the reality of the participants. With the help of a highly trained leader, our goal was to create a permissive environment that nurtured different perceptions and points of view. We wanted to give participants ample opportunity to comment, to explain and to share experiences and attitudes, providing clues and insights that might be reflective of their beliefs on learning and literacy.

Prior to engaging in peer discussion groups, a set of materials was assembled to provoke targeted discussions of parents' perceptions on learning and literacy development. On the basis of numerous visits to the school, informal lunches with participants, conversations with teachers and administrators, we generated an open-ended discussion guide. Designed to provide an opportunity for the participants to answer from a variety of dimensions, questions were developed to be broad in the beginning, then

more focused as the conversations continued. These questions, however, were only a guide; serendipitous comments and questions from the leader or participants were encouraged within the context of the overall purpose of the study.

Two additional sets of materials were collected in preparation for the discussions. The first involved pictures of children from different countries around the world, as they played, worked, and learned in a variety of settings with teachers, parents, and friends. The second set of materials was generated by visiting a multicultural preschool in the area; here, we taped 8 short video scenes (2-5 minutes), demonstrating children playing and learning with their peers and adults. These materials were designed to be used, if appropriate, during the group meetings to generate lively discussions within a multicultural context (see Appendix A for discussion guide and video segments).

Procedures

Groups of mothers were randomly assigned to one of five discussion groups (4-5 per group) held in a quiet setting within the school. Discussion time varied on the basis of their interests and comments from 1.5-2.5 hours each. All sessions, totaling approximately 10 hours were recorded with permission, and later transcribed.

We attempted to establish a thoughtful, but informal atmosphere beginning with refreshments, casual conversation, and basic ground rules. Then the leader gave a general overview of the topic, such as "I'm interested in your views about your children's learning, and what kind of schooling you'd like them to have," then proceeded along the lines of the questioning route. When topics appeared to be covered, and no fresh perspectives seemed to emerge, the leader thanked the mothers for their participation.

Data analysis

The constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used to analyze the data into codible categories. Five members of the multicultural research team viewed and read tapes and transcripts independently, identifying themes or categories across the groups within the context of the discussion, and highlighting particular words or phrases, their tone and intensity, that reflected these themes. Conversations on extraneous, or highly personal topics, unrelated to the subject, were not coded. Coming together as a group, we first compared categories over a series of weeks, and then examined similarities and differences within categories. Our next step was to establish linkages between categories that appeared to reflect a common perspective. For example, one category that emerged involved the importance of how children learn. Some mothers believed that they learned by being "told" rather than by "experience or interaction, " suggesting a view that children learn through transmission. This category appeared closely tied to the view that a teacher's role was to "train" children through drill and practice. Thus, through comparisons and contrasts in each category, we examined parents' view of themselves as teachers, and the ways in which learning and literacy might be facilitated, on a continuum of perspectives. Following this analysis, we then derived a set of theoretical propositions within and across categories and perspectives that seem to best encompass parents' beliefs about learning and literacy for their children. This analysis provided us with a set of shared beliefs that could be used to facilitate a more collaborative process of involving parents in their children's early education.

Results

Our analysis indicated that these adolescent mothers did not share a common world view. Rather, their orientations toward learning and literacy

reflected several different child development perspectives, broadly defined along a continuum of transmission, maturational, and transactional beliefs.

Insert Table 1 about here

On the transmission side of the continuum, comments seemed to reflect the belief that knowledge was finite, defined as a set of skills, and transmittable from those who had it to those who did not. Children were expected to master what was taught by the adult, and to reproduce responses as learned without variation, "There should be set times every day for learning."

Moving toward the middle of the continuum, was a more maturational view of learning. Here, learning was not confined to a set of tangible skills, but incorporated within a broader definition of education. "Education is about life in general. All the education in the world don't mean you know knowledge about life. Knowledge about life, schools, the ways the street is, everything." Children were thought to have an innate potential for learning which enabled them to develop their individual capacities. Thus, learning was seen primarily as the result of physiological development (i.e. "children learn when they are ready to learn.). Less emphasis was placed on "what" children should be learning, than on insuring that they were provided with a safe, nurturing environment within which to learn.

At the other end of the continuum, was a more transactional view. Within developmental parameters, children were thought to actively construct knowledge through direct experiences, through manipulation of objects and interpersonal interactions. Rather than situating the locus of control in either the adult (i.e. transmission), or the child (i.e. maturational), the transactional view

seemed to empower both the child and the parent. Inspired by curiosity, the children was thought to act as the creative agent with adults facilitating and guiding the learning process. "The more you do with a child, the more they learn."

These perspectives were reflected in each group. Within each session, however, there was a dynamic interplay between the majority of participants expressing transmission and maturational beliefs, and a vocal minority, providing a counterpoint from a more transactional perspective. The following analysis describes parents' beliefs, focusing on their roles as educators of their children, their methods of instructing, and their views of early literacy learning contextualized within their daily practices with family and children.

The parents' role

Reflective of a transmission perspective, most mothers suggested that children's acquisition of information was directly attributable to the performance of the adult as teacher. Consistent with this view, was the belief shared by many that they were responsible for their children's educational success. "We're the teachers to make sure they get an education." Most of the mothers wanted their young children to learn practical life skills (i.e. potty training, hygiene), as well as preparatory skills for school including the identification of body parts, shapes, colors, numbers, and the alphabet. Displays of knowledge from children through recitation, were often acknowledged through external reinforcement. Many of the young mothers reported rewarding their children with food or material tokens (i.e.. barrettes, sneakers, toys), "I'll buy him a pack of chips or something. And that just encourages a child to do things because they know that once they do it, they know it pleases their parents. That's why, you know, you got to applaud a child."

Many were eager to prepare their children for school, frequently teaching them skills they presumed would be needed in school. "My daughter's not even in preschool. Yet she know her alphabets and her numbers to ten. I taught her that when she first turned one. And I'm telling her to spell "dog" and cat." In several instances, mothers attempted to instruct their child while still in utero. "This may sound funny, but when I was pregnant, I used to write the alphabet on my tummy. I used to write "read" and stuff." Much of the mothers' efforts seemed designed to mold and shape their children so that he or she might "fit" into the educational system.

But of even greater importance than "teaching" their children, mothers' central concern seemed to reside with providing children with security. Beyond the basic requirement of food, shelter, and clothing, mothers identified their role as primary providers of the nurturance necessarily to enable their children to develop their potential. "You have to give them love. We all need love. Just to know that someone is there for you, that's why I'm here for. I'm here to take care of him, to make sure he have what he needs and what he wants. Cause he my child. I want to bring out the best in him, not what I want him to be, but what he wants to be."

Many of these comments alluded to the futility of trying to exercise control over other individuals. Finding themselves in the position of regulating their child's behavior while at the same time, rebelling against their own parental constraints, many adolescent mothers voiced concerns about "pressuring" the child, "Bad things happen when you put too much pressure on your kids, instead of doing right, they do the other way 'cause they can't take it, 'cause it's too much pressure. Better let them be what they want to be." Therefore, though many of the mothers thought it necessary to teach skills, they often expressed

reluctance to do so, believing in their child's basic ability to learn what was needed when it was needed.

While these women expressed the desire that their children complete high-school, underlying their hope for the future was a persistent reluctance to teach or mandate expectations. "I just want him to live his life." Inherent in this apparent freedom of choice was a feeling of powerlessness. Instead of discussing life's options, one young women talked about "dealing with" life's circumstances, expressing grave fears for the future, "I don't know if there's gonna be a future for my kid. I see him when he starts to go to the potty on his own. I'm serious, that's as far as I bother to look." Within this context, much of the discussions appeared to focus on a desire to exert control over a situation that was believed to be beyond control.

A few mothers, on the other hand, expressed views more congruent with a transactional perspective. These mothers often focused on processes like conversation, and play as a vehicle for children's learning. Many of their comments reflected a strong interest in guiding children to be independent. "I think if you let your child do a lot of things by herself, that child will be fine. I let her do her homework by herself and then she comes to me when she don't know it and I check it over. But if you stay over your child, your child won't learn to be independent." Thus, in contrast to others, these mothers frequently relied on responding contingently to children's cues, rather than on initiating activity.

V: My daughter is in that stage of 'why this?' and 'Why that?' and I really like when something's' wrong and she be like, "mommy, why, why why? and I tell her.

H: Does it make you impatient when she does that?

V: No. It doesn't hurt none to ask questions. How is she gonna learn something?

Thus mothers who viewed their role from a more transactive perspective, seemed to emphasize the processes important for children to learn, rather than particular products or skills. However, it was clear that most of the mothers appeared to be "weighted" by the responsibility of having a young child. They viewed their role primarily as nurturers, responsible for taking care of their children, teaching them when they could the skills they believed were necessary to become socially competent, independent, and educated individuals.

The Child's Role

Tensions noted in the interplay between "teaching" and "pressuring" the child, were similarly reflected in mothers' beliefs about the child's role in learning. Here, comments ranged along the continuum from transmission to maturational beliefs. On the one hand, children were asked to be "attentive observers," expected to "sit down and learn." Consistent with this attitude was a strong emphasis on obedience, and respect for elders, with little tolerance expressed for curiosity and questioning, "She be asking questions just to be asking questions."

Yet on the other hand, mothers often voiced the belief that a child's role was to "behave like a child." Particularly committed to providing their children with the gift of time, young mothers regretted having been denied a childhood. "I was always the adult in my house, and I want my son to have a childhood," was echoed by many of the young women. These mothers placed little emphasis on "correct" behavior, "They supposed to make noise. They supposed to make a mess. If they don't I think something is wrong." Therefore,

mothers were expected to let "kids be kids" and demonstrated maternal instincts like flexibility and patience. "Honey you've got to have patience. That comes with the package. That comes when you have them. When you have kids, I mean, that patience comes with it." Children were accorded greater freedom to develop social antennae in order to independently negotiate the environment. Along with this belief was the approval of children's mobility and autonomous decision-making. Mothers often pointed to independent learning, like practices such as potty training (i.e. "she started by herself") and bedtime (i.e. "we just up 'til we go to sleep."). Thus, "getting" an education for children was often defined as learning to be "mature, independent mainly, school smart, street smart, everything."

Beliefs about learning and literacy

Mothers uniformly agreed on the importance of early acquisition of literacy. In fact, the learning of letters was often described as a "benchmark" of development, akin to walking and talking. Expressing a transmission perspective, most described literacy as knowing one's "alphabets," or ABCs; a set of skills unrelated to particular purposes or social context. "She knows her ABC's'; she can even say them backwards."

In some cases, mothers read books to children for didactic purposes, to teach children to count, to recite their alphabet, and to teach them right from wrong. "My mom bought my son some of these books, and they have like, one of them is the title like Be Careful. They are like "safety books; they show him and tell him to be careful--"Don't do that." Similarly, stories were used as teaching tools, "When my son is bad, I tell stories, like "You know what? The Boogie Man is going to come and get you, cause you was bad. And you know what? The Boogie Man said any child that is bad, he is going to come and git!"

But beyond teaching basic skills, most mothers expressed a maturational perspective, believing that the child was not ready to read, "When they're ready they try so you learn when they're ready to read." Rather, they felt that children lacked the attentional skills to listen, preferring television programs to books. As one mother said, "I don't like reading to him, plus my son is very inattentive. He will not sit and listen to you read. The most I have gotten him to do with educational programs is Barney. Thank God for Barney."

In contrast to the majority of participants, some mothers reflecting a more transactive view, regarded their young children's approximations of conventional reading and writing as valid signs of early literacy. For these mothers, both the acquisition of skills, and processes like conversation were viewed as supportive of literacy development. For example, they encouraged children to scribble, to handle books, and to read aloud.

"My mother reads to my baby. And when she reading, my little baby has to have a book too. And my little baby says "La, la, la, la," you know, when she's reading and tries to say what my mom say. Like she tries to talk over the top of it, like she's really reading this book. She'll hold it, she might have it upside down, but she'll hold it, the book, like she's saying something!"

One mother indicated that she participated in make-believe telephone conversations with her daughter, "I write the number on a piece of paper. She'll copy it. She'll call people and say, "Is such and such home." Other mothers described using books as narrative props, "I not only read to him, I kind-a-like, somewhat, act it out. I'm like, ' Now what do you think is gonna happen when he do that? And even though he don't talk much, he understand what I be saying." Thus, while there was overall agreement that children needed to learn basic skills (i.e. particularly alphabet knowledge), some mothers approached

literacy as "not what you do, but how you do it," exploring opportunities for creative social interactions.

Beliefs about schooling

Most of the young mothers regarded preschool as a critical preparatory setting for success in later schooling. Views of what actually constituted a "good school," however, varied along the continuum. For example, for many mothers expressing a transmission view, qualities such as skill instruction, tightly managed time schedules, disciplined behavior, grades, and tests, were seen as positive indicators of a well-run preschool. Consequently, a good teacher was defined as a good manager, training children to sit attentively for long intervals of time in order to learn.

> I worked in a day care center and my kids were 18 months old. When we walked them in they had a pre-made tape. The V.C.R. was set, the babies was in their high chairs, the other kids around the table. The tape was sort of like Barney. They taught their A.B.C. songs. Then after that they had another tape which was a Sesame Street pre-made tape when they watched that. Then it was time for play time. Right? But they got them in the custom of when you go to school. You don't go to recess when you go to school. You go to class and these kids were grasping that when they was 18 months old.

In reacting to several play scenes on videotape, therefore, many feared that valuable instructional time in school could be wasted on child-directed activities or "free play":

> J: They can have free play, but I don't think it should be all free play.

S: You gotta sit them down and teach them something.

A: Yeah, teach them something.

J: Like my son. I have a schedule of everything he does.

Leader: So, what do you mean by "free play?"

J: Like what they were doing in the video, but I think they should have, they should sit down and learn.

A: Yup.

Leader: You don't think they learn anything from that?

J: They were learning, but I don't think they were learning what they should. I don't think they were learning a lot.

Others reflecting a more maturational perspective were most concerned with providing a "safe environment where there's nobody harming them." In this context, the teacher's role was to provide a positive role model (i.e. excellent moral character), and skillful classroom management. Expressing great concern for their children's emotional and physical well-being, these mothers often found it difficult to relinquish their child's care to that of the school. For example, reacting to a male teacher in a video segment, many mothers were fearful and suspicious, regarding men as unsuitable or inept caregivers, "I feel much safer with women watching my children than men." From this view, then, a good school was a "safe" school, which when provided with equipment, and proper custodial care, enabled children to learn when they were ready to learn, (e.g. motivation being the child's responsibility.) "They got to do what they got to do; either they learn or they don't learn."

For some mothers, reflecting a more transactive view, the creation of a warm and caring rapport between teachers and children was seen as an important aspect of the learning environment. "If a child likes a teacher, it's

better communication. There's not too much crying and stuff like that. With a lot of children, they were all playing together. There was no fighting. No arguments or anything." In a good school, teachers developed a "respectful" relationship with children; they were not custodians, but individuals who would "take time out to help each and every one of the kids, they come around and sit with you and talk with you," encouraging children to use their imagination.

Words, like "creativity" and "imagination" were used by some of the mothers to refer to and define the thought processes demonstrated in children's activities. Play was considered valuable because it allowed children not only to practice newly acquired skills, but to extend their learning within a child-directed, independent context. "They want to play, that's all kids want to do when they first wake-up in the morning until they go to bed at night. You can teach them through the play." An example of the dynamic interplay between mothers' perspectives could be noted in this discussion between Verna and Tanja, after having viewed a scene with children playing in a sand box:

> V: It's not playing in the sand; it's imagination. It could have been anything. They could have been sitting there and making something. I'm just saying, it may be nothing to us, but to them it's a whole new world!
>
> T: I mean it's good and everything. But it's a time where you've got to take the kids and say, 'Okay, now we're going to learn the ABC's or 'Today we're going to learn how to make the number 2.'
>
> V: But who's to say they didn't do that?
>
> T: But that's not what we was shown on the tape. We were shown one basic thing that they were doing and that was play.
>
> V: Well, just tell me this, if your child was in a day care center and your child was told, 'Okay today we're going to learn the ABC's what little child

do you know is going to sit there and say, 'Okay, we're going to learn our ABC's? They can be learning their ABC's while they're sitting in the sandbox too.

Thus, in contrast to others, these mothers seemed to regard play as a basic characteristic of young children's behavior as they interacted with people and objects in their environment. A good school, then, was one that not only provided children with skills, and security, but opportunities for child-directed activity to facilitate learning.

Shared Goals: Characterizing Adolescent Mothers' Belief Systems

These discussions reflect on several critical issues. First, much of the research on parent beliefs, values and practices has focused on intergroup differences, often assuming the homogeneity of experiences for families within a particular culture (Bernstein, 1970; Diaz, Neal, & Vachio, 1991; Ninio, 1980). This assumption, as highlighted by these discussions, is clearly unwarranted. Beliefs, among participants of similar ethnic, educational and economic status were situated along a broad spectrum, ranging from a more behavioral to a more constructivist perspective. By centering on the content of parents' attitudes and beliefs, and not the linguistic styles, we evidenced important individual differences among and within this cultural community. It suggests, then, that as part of understanding culturally diverse populations, we need to focus on the individual voices among them. As Greene has argued (1992), although cultural background surely plays a part in shaping identity, it does not determine one's identity. Rather, it may well create differences that should be honored and different orientations that must be understood.

At the same time, however, these discussions did indicate points of convergence, or shared goals in the cultural community which seemed to reflect

basic beliefs of all participants in their attitudes toward schooling and literacy. Each of these beliefs are briefly described below.

Belief System #1: "You gotta teach them something"

Voiced with greatest repetition, mothers wanted their children to thrive both socially and intellectually. This belief was reflected in their desire for schools to teach both practical life skills (i.e. how to deal socially with others; hygiene), and academically-oriented skills (i.e. letter names, numbers, listening skills). Thus, the differences among mothers tended to focus more on "how," to teach, rather than on "what" to teach. As Delpit has argued (1988), skill acquisition seemed to be regarded as part of the "culture of power," providing children with the "rules" needed for future success in schooling. And in fact,Tizard and colleagues large-scale longitudinal analysis of 33 infant schools in the inner cities suggested that the strongest predictor of attainment at age 7 was the amount of 3R knowledge that the children had before they ever started school (Tizard, Blatchford, Burke, Farquhar, & Plewis, 1988).

Belief System #2: "I want my child to be safe"

Of critical importance to all mothers, was the desire for their child to be in a safe environment. In fact, school was valued by many mothers because it provided a refuge from the unpredictable atmosphere of the "street." Yet, at the same time, the young women acknowledged that their children's ultimate safety resided in how well they became sensitive to the social cues and learned the behaviors necessary to fend for themselves in a hostile environment. Therefore, they placed strong emphasis on their children's learning a variety of interpersonal skills, from cooperation to autonomy that might facilitate social negotiation both in and out of school.

Belief System #3: "A good teacher is keeping that respect"

While some mothers preferred a more authoritarian teacher role model than others, clearly all regarded "respect" (respect for children, from children and between teacher and family) as a critical component for establishing and maintaining family/school relations. Mothers respected teachers who were nurturant, maintained order, willing to attend to children's individual needs, and taught them skills. Making visible some measures of children's skill development through reports, folders, and conversations earned great respect **from** parents. Similarly, teachers demonstrated respect **for** parents, when they communicated informally and shared information that might assist parents in their efforts to help their children.

> "I'm a friend of Tameika's (her daughter) teacher. She knows I'm a single parent and I'm young. She's working with me a lot, but I think that's helping me a lot, the way she teaches me how to. See I don't have any patience, but she teaches me to "just sit down, and you do your homework while Tameika does her homework," and when you're finished you can recite words with her. And we worked it out, the way she told me to do.

Belief System #4: "What I'm doing, I'm doing for her"

All mothers sought to be positive role models to their children. For many, in fact, this was the central goal that motivated their decision to continue their own education. "I had to become something for myself, to be an example for him. It would be okay for him to look up to different people out there, but I want him to look up to his mom." Yet many believed they lacked the skills and resources that other mainstream parents had at their disposal for helping to upgrade their children's performance. In addition to communication, therefore,

parents wanted to be sufficiently skilled themselves in order to successfully negotiate their children's future schooling.

Creating a Collaborative Relationship

As noted from these discussions, parents in this study reflected basic beliefs highly compatible with those of the school: they clearly valued educational achievement, security and independence in learning, respect from and for teachers, and information which might enable them to enhance their children's learning. These beliefs, in fact, represent the cornerstones of education in a pluralistic society (Greene, 1992). However, while sharing much in common with mainstream educational ideals, they also indicate very specific beliefs, spoken passionately at times, about how best to educate their children. It is by giving voice to these beliefs that will enable educators to forge an alliance with parents to improve minority children's early education. This alliance must include efforts from both constituents: professionals must be willing to incorporate a range of pedagogical teaching strategies to be more congruent with family beliefs; similarly, parents must be willing to participate in activities that may enhance their role as educators to their children. To create such a collaborative relationship often requires both adaptations in the early education programs as well as in parent involvement activities. Several illustrations from our family literacy program, **Reading Together**, were designed to establish such a constructive relationship between families and professionals.

Comments from parents suggested that changes were first required in the day care program. The staff in partnership with parents began to work together to provide a program more congruent with parents' beliefs about learning and literacy, and to help in assisting parents to become more effective change agents with their child. Our goal was to encourage an exchange of

information between parents and staff, so that parents might begin to participate as team members in program planning. As a result of these discussions, the staff devised a number of programmatic and structural changes in the day-care and parent education programs to reflect parents' needs and beliefs.

Changes in the day-care program

Responding to mothers' beliefs about early learning, the physical environment of the center was redesigned. We established two literacy-related play settings based on principles from previous research (Neuman & Roskos, 1992; Neuman & Roskos, 1993): a fully-stocked kitchen, and a grocery store. Within each setting, labels of common objects, and environmental print were prominently displayed (i.e. toaster, and refrigerator) throughout the play spaces and literacy-related objects appropriate to the young toddlers were included in each area. For example, the kitchen area was stocked with a telephone, cereal boxes, egg cartons, and recipe books among many other items and toys; the grocery store included a cash register, coupons, boxes, and items on sale. These settings were designed to enable teachers, parents and children to engage together in playful language and literacy activity, as well as to invite independent explorations for children playing together. In many cases, for example, we found children counting dishes, or reading labels, and cereal boxes, essentially building skills within a developmental context.

Next to the play areas we created a small library with books shelved in low-lying book cases for toddlers' use. Some books were narrative, but the majority were informational relating to concepts and skills mothers' viewed as important. For example, some favorite books included an alphabet book, Alligators all around (Sendak, 1991), a counting book, Ten, Nine Eight, (Band, 1983), as well as books about safety and neighborhoods, Building a House (Barton, 1981), Dig, Drill, Dump, Fill (Hoban, 1975), Watch Where you Go(Noll,

1993), and Hey Al (Yorinks, 1986). These play settings, therefore, provided children with opportunities to playfully engage in skillful activity, while practicing a variety of interpersonal skills that might enhance learning both in and out of school.

Our next step was to restructure part of children's day. Whereas before change there were few required activities aside from meals and naptimes, after change, the children's day was structured to include a minimum of 15 minutes of storybook reading (using the selections above among others), 15 minutes of a goal-structured learning activity (i.e. making paperbag puppets), and a free-play period in the literacy-related settings. Each activity was repeated often to encourage mastery. For example, not only were the same books re-read on a regular basis, but the same activities were repeated so that children could anticipate, and begin to play a more active role in completing each project. All other play options, such as rough and tumble, and bike riding were highly discouraged during these periods. Thus, in creating these structural changes, the goal was to provide a more developmentally appropriate environment which would enhance the learning of both practical skills and academic skills that the parents believed were important.

Changes in the parent education program

Before change, mothers' attended weekly parenting education classes at school to teach them knowledge of child development and interactional skills as parents, with no opportunities for linking what was learned to interactions with children. Following change, we restructured parent education classes to include their regular involvement in the day care center.

Mothers were invited to spend one hour a day in the day-care center for ten sessions. Rather than "service the group" (Smith, 1980), they were mentored by staff and researchers to become actively involved in the

educational activities described above, reading to children, helping to accomplish the goal-directed activity, and playing actively with them. Not only were they encouraged to interact with their own children, but with 2 or 3 of the toddlers at a time. Working with small groups allowed mothers to experience how these activities might enable children to become increasingly independent as they interacted with their peers. We videotaped many of these sessions, and worked individually with mothers to demonstrate the importance of such skills as labeling, scaffolding, and responsivity to children's initiatives in reading and play. Following these sessions, we would focus on the skills children learned as the result of their interactions. Interestingly, many of the mothers began to describe how "smart" the children were, "they be asking many questions and they had many answers also." In the comfort of a familiar play center like the kitchen, one mother noted how "Tiffany herself really enjoy working in the kitchen with pots and pans, cooking, eating and I found that excellent for her age."

Before change, mothers were often isolated from others who had children of similar ages; rarely did they have opportunities to talk informally with one another. After change, we initiated regular informal lunch time discussions where mothers could share information about their children. Here, we used the dynamic interplay between transmission, maturational and tranactive views found in the previous discussions to encourage mothers to stretch their ideas and develop further insights about the ways children learn. In some cases, we showed them videotapes of their activities in the day-care center, pointing out promising practices, and important generalizations about children. At other times, mothers began to explore many ideas on their own, " I found after each puzzle I did with Kalief, it was easier to do the next one with him--boy, is he smart for his age. After that I tried to get him to read to me or tell me the story as

"he sees it." He did a good job too." Using their skills and resources, mothers began to feel more confident in their roles as children's first language and literacy teachers.

Finally, linking their literacy learning to that of their children's emerging skills, mothers began to keep a reflective journal of all activities in the day-care center. Following their visit, each mother detailed her experiences, both positive and negative, and how these activities might link with their lives outside of school. In a typical dialogical form, one of us would respond to many of their comments in a nonjudgemental fashion.

In making these changes, then, we sought to more closely align parent education and parent involvement in the day care center. Working together as a team, these changes provided mothers with greater opportunities to communicate informally with teachers and staff, practice new skills, and ensure that their children were safe and well-cared for. Further, they could see first-hand the specific skills the children were attaining, and how their informational reading enhanced children's curiosity and concepts about print. One mother wrote, "Today at the day care center I worked with Tameika. We made animals out of clay and we read books together, and it was very inspirational working with her." And another, "Since I've been visiting the day-care, I realize that I do things differently; like before now, my little brother would say smart things, and I would hit him or scream, but now I've learned how to just be calm and talk to him. I shock myself but that's what I mean by experience is the best teacher because this day-care experience has taught me patience and prepared me for working better with my child."

Conclusions

As Harry has so poignantly written (1992a), establishing a "posture of reciprocity" between parents and professionals requires a delicate shift in the

balance of power between schools and communities. This power shift must be founded upon a basic respect for families, their knowledge and beliefs, and their cultural community as a primary context for children's early development and learning. Within this basic frame, actual parental services and involvement may take many forms, with the overriding intent of empowering individuals to make informed decisions and to assume control over their lives.

Through a better understanding of parental beliefs, parental involvement programs may be designed to enable culturally diverse parents to realize their aspirations for their children. But mutual respect is not enough; groups with diverse agendas need to identify shared goals and devise strategies for successful implementation. Parental beliefs may help shape certain school activities and policies; at the same time, these beliefs may inform school personnel of information and strategies that parents need for negotiating with schools. Such collaborative efforts may help to build constructive relationships where both parents and teachers work together to support children's ultimate success in schooling.

References

Alan Guttmacher Institute (1986). Teenage pregnancy in industrialized countries. New Haven, CT.: Yale University Press.

Au, K. H., & Jordan, C. (1981). Teaching reading to Hawaiian children: Finding a culturally appropriate solution. In H.Trueba, G. P. Guthrie, & K. H. Au (Eds.), Culture in the bilingual classroom: Studies in classroom ethnography (pp. 139-152). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Band, M. (1983). Ten, nine, eight. NY: Mulberry Books.

Barton, B. (1981). Building a house. NY: Mulberry Books.

Berlin, G., & Sum, A. (1988). Toward a more perfect union: Basic skills, poor families, and our economic future. . NY: Ford Foundation.

Bernstein, B. (1970). A sociolinguistic approach to socialization. In F. Williams (Ed.), Language and poverty: Perspectives on a theme Chicago: Markham.

Buchmann, M., & Schwille, J. (1983). Education: The overcoming of experience. American Journal of Education, 92, 30-51.

Delgado-Gaitan, C. (1990). Literacy for empowerment . New York: Falmer Press.

Delgado-Gaitan, C. (1991). Involving parents in the schools: A process of empowerment. American Journal of Education, 100, 20-47.

Delpit, L. D. (1988). The silenced dialogue: Power and pedagogy in educating other people's children. Harvard Educational Review, 58, 280-298.

Diaz, R., Neal, C., & Vachio, A. (1991). Maternal teaching in the zone of proximal development: A comparison of low- and high-risk dyads. Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 37, 83-108.

Ford, D. (1993). Back students' achievement orientation as a function of perceived family achievement orientation and demographic variables. Journal of Negro Education, 62, 47-66.

Fulton, A., Murphy, K., & Anderson, S. (1991). Increasing adolescent mothers' knowledge of child development: An intervention program. Adolescence, 26, 73-81.

Furstenberg, F., Brooks-Gunn, J., & Morgan, S. P. (1987). Adolescent mothers in later life . NY: Cambridge University Press.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research . New York: Aldine Press.

Goldenberg, C., & Gallimore, R. (1991). Local knowledge, research knowledge, and educational change: A case study of early Spanish reading improvement. Educational Researcher, 20, 2-14.

Goldenberg, C. N. (1987). 'Low-income Hispanic parents' contributions to their first-grade children's word-recognition skills. Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 18, 149-179.

Greene, M. (1992). The passions of pluralism: Multiculturalism and the expanding community. Journal of Negro Education, 61, 250-261.

Hale, J. E. (1982). Black children: Their roots, culture, and learning styles . Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press.

Harry, B. (1992a). An ethnographic study of cross-cultural communication with Puerto Rican-American families in the special education system. American Educational Research Journal, 29, 471-494.

Harry, B. (1992b). Cultural diversity, families, and the special education system . New York: Teachers College Press.

Harry, B., & Kalyanpur, M. (1991). Towards a model of collaborative interaction with culturally diverse families in special education: A posture of reciprocity. Manuscript submitted for publication.

Hess, R. D., & McDevitt, T. M. (1984). Some cognitive consequences of maternal intervention techniques: A longitudinal study. Child Development, 55, 2017-2030.

Hess, R. D., & Shipman, V. C. (1965). Early experience and the socialization of cognitive modes in children. Child Development, 36, 869-886.

Hoban, T. (1975). Dig, drill, dump, fill. NY: Greenwillow.

Kochanska, G., Kuczynski, L. & Radke-Yarrow, M. (1989). Correspondence between mothers' self-reported and observed child-rearing practices. Child Development, 60, 56-63.

Krueger, R. (1988). Focus groups . Newbury Park: Sage.

Landy, S., & Walsh, S. (1988). Early intervention with high-risk teenage mothers and their infants. Early child development and care, 37, 27-46.

Laosa, L. (1980). Maternal teaching strategies in Chicano and Anglo-American families: The influence of culture and education on maternal behavior. Child Development, 51, 759-765.

Laosa, L. (1981). Maternal behavior: Sociocultural diversity in modes of family interaction. In R. W. Henderson (Ed.), Parent-child interaction: Theory, research, and prospects (pp. 125-164). New York: Academic Press.

Lareau, A. (1989). Home advantage: Social class and parental intervention in elementary education . New York: Falmer Press.

Madden, N. A., Slavin, R., Karweit, N., Dolan, L. & Wasik, B. (1993). Success for all: Longitudinal effects of a restructuring program for inner-city elementary schools. American Educational Research Journal, 30, 123-148.

McGillicuddy-De Lisi, A. (1982). Parental beliefs about developmental processes. Human Development, 25, 192-200.

Moreno, R. (1991). Maternal teaching of preschool children in minority and low status families: A critical review. Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 6, 395-410.

Mullis, I. V. S., & Jenkins, L. B. (1990). The reading report card, 1971-88. . Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Nespor, J. (1987). The role of beliefs in the practice of teaching. Journal of Curriculum Studies, 19, 317-328.

Neuman, S. B., & Gallagher, P. (in press). Joining together in literacy learning: Teenage mothers and children. Reading Research Quarterly.

Neuman, S. B., & Roskos, K. (1992). Literacy objects as cultural tools: Effects on children's literacy behaviors in play. Reading Research Quarterly, 27, 202-225.

Neuman, S. B., & Roskos, K. (1993). Access to print for children of poverty: Differential effects of adult mediation and literacy-enriched play settings on environmental and functional print tasks. American Educational Research Journal, 30, 95-122.

Ninio, A. (1980). Picturebook reading in mother-infant dyads belonging to two subgroups in Israel. Child Development, 51, 587-590.

Noll, S. (1993). Watch where you go. NY: Puffin.

Norman-Jackson, J. (1982). Family interactions, language development, and primary reading achievement of black children in families of low-income. Child Development, 53, 349-358.

Pajares, M. F. (1992). Teachers' beliefs and educational research: Cleaning up a messy construct. Review of Educational Research, 62, 307-332.

Pinnell, G. S. (1989). Reading recovery: Helping at-risk children learn to read. Elementary School Journal, 90, 161-182.

Reis, J. S., & Herz, E. J. (1987). Correlates of adolescent parenting. Adolescence, 22, 599-609.

Rescorla. (1987). Rescorla educational attitude scale . Unpublished manuscript. Bryn Mawr, PA: Bryn Mawr College.

Sander, J. (1991). Before their time . New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Schachter, F. F. (1979). Everyday mother talk to toddlers: Early intervention . New York: Academic.

Schaefer, E., & Edgerton, M. (1985). Parent and child correlates of parental modernity. In I. E. Sigel (Ed.), Parental beliefs systems: The psychological consequences for children (pp. pp. 287-318). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Schweinhart, L., & Weikart, D. (1988). Education for young children living in poverty: Child-initiated learning or teacher-directed instruction? Elementary School Journal, 89, 213-226.

Sendak, M. (1991). Alligators all around. NY: Harper Trophy.

Sigel, I. (1985). A conceptual analysis of beliefs. In I. Sigel (Ed.), Parental belief systems (pp. 345-371). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Sigel, I. E., & McGillicuddy-Delisi, A. (1984). Parents as teachers of their children: A distancing behavior model. In A. Pellegrini, & T. Yawkey (Eds.), The development of oral and written language in social contexts, (pp. 71-92). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Silvern, S. (1988). Continuity/discontinuity between home and early childhood education environments. Elementary School Journal, 89, 147-159.

Smith, T. (1980). Parents & Preschool . Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.

Stevens, J. (1984). Child development knowledge and parenting skills. Family Relations, 33, 237-244.

Strom, R. D. (1984). Parent as a teacher inventory . Bensenville, Il.: Scholastic Testing Service.

Teale, W. H., & Sulzby, E. (1989). Emergent literacy: New perspectives. In D. Strickland, & L. M. Morrow (Eds.), Emerging literacy: Young children learn to read and write (pp. 1-15). Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association.

Weisner, T., Gallimore, R., & Jordon, C. (1988). Unpackaging cultural effects on classroom learning: Native Hawaiian peer assistance and child-generated activity. Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 19, 327-353.

White, K., Taylor, M., & Moss, V. (1992). Does research support claims about the benefits of involving parents in early intervention programs? Review of Educational Research, 62, 91-125.

Williams, C. W. (1991). Black teenage mothers . Lexington, MA.: Lexington Books.

Yorinks, A. (1986). Hey Al. Toronto: Collins.

Zigler, E., & Valentine, J. (1979). Project Head Start: A legacy of the war on poverty. New York: Macmillan,

Table 1

Continuum of perspectives on learning and literacy

Beliefs about	Transmission	Maturational	Transactional
The parent's role	Emphasis on direct teaching; knowledge defined as a set of skills transmitted by adult	Emphasis is on child's abilities to learn through his or her own experiences; parent's role is to provide nurturance and opportunity	Emphasis is on encouraging children to actively construct knowledge through their own initiative with adult facilitation
The child's role	Child learners expected to master what is taught through observation/and or recitation.	Learners expected to initiate on the basis of interest and personal/social needs.	Child expected to learn from engaging child-oriented activity (i.e. play)
Learning and literacy	Emphasis on the early acquisition of alphabet, numbers, colors--discrete skills	No particular emphasis; child will learn when "ready"	Emphasis on child developing at his/her own pace; encouragement through engaging in storybook reading, conversations, and responses to questions
Schooling	Teachers should manage instruction; learning should paced; priority of group; product-orientation	Teachers should provide a safe environment; should be positive role model to children; schools should be physically well-maintained	Teachers should focus on individual needs of children; provide a learning environment; for child-initiated activity and skill learning